

THE
Philippian Jailor's
CONVERSION,
WITH THE
OCCASIONS and CONSEQUENCES of it,
CONSIDER'D and IMPROV'D,
IN A
DISCOURSE
ON
ACTS xvi. 23, 24, &c.

Legant & intelligant, intueantur & fateantur, non lege atque doctrinâ insonante forinsecus, sed internâ atque occultâ, mirabili atque ineffabili potestate operari DEUM in cordibus hominum, non solum veras revelationes, sed etiam bonas voluntates. AUGUSTIN de Gratiâ Christi, contra Pelagium, & Celestium. cap. 29.

By *SAMUEL HEBDEN.*

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THE
Philippian Journal

CONVERSION

WITH THE

Occasional and Correspondence of the

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

1842

DISCOURSE



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By SAMUEL BARNARD

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[Third Edition]

A DISCOURSE

ON THE CONVERSION of the JAILOR,

Spoken of *Acts* xvi. 23, 24, &c.

HAVING spoken of the Conversion of *Lydia*, with the Consequences of it, as recorded *Acts* xvi. 14, 15. I now come to the *Jailor*, whom we read of *ver.* 23, &c. — This Man is to be looked upon as a more illustrious Monument of Free Grace than *Lydia*: For having been an ignorant stupid Idolater, a Man of a fierce, rugged, savage Disposition, and an active cruel Persecutor of the Servants of *Christ*; he was so far altered for the better, as to become an humble, thankful, joyful Believer; and not only so, but, probably, an eminently able Minister of the Gospel, and one of the *Bishops*, or *Pastors*, of the Church of *Christ* gathered at *Philippi*. — The Change which converting Grace makes is very considerable: And 'tis of the same Kind on every one, who is so happy as to partake of it. What a gracious God did for *Lydia*, in opening her Heart, the same he did for the *Jailor*. Yet there was somewhat extraordinary in what concerned the Conversion of this ignorant Savage, this Wolf of a Man, this violent Persecutor. The *Occasions* of it, the *Speediness* of it, the *Consequences* of it; all these were not a little marvellous and surprizing. Scarce

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any of the primitive Conversions, that of the Apostle *Paul* excepted, were more memorable than *this*.—To begin with the *Occasions* of it. A Variety of remarkable Incidents preceded, and made Way for, the *Conversion* of this Monster of Wickedness. — The Wisdom of Providence evidences itself in working about it's noblest Designs gradually. One Event makes Way for another ; and several Things concur for bringing about the *Conversion* of a Sinner. Now the *Preparatives* to the *Conversion* of the *Jailor* spoken of were these.

1. *Paul* and *Silas* having been cruelly treated before, were thrust into Prison, and committed to the Custody of this inhuman *Jailor*, who having received a strict Charge concerning them, did rather more than he was ordered : For “ he “ thrust them into the inner Prison, and made “ their Feet fast in the Stocks.” *Ver.* 23, 24.

2. These good Men being thus closely confined, they behaved it in a most Christian-like Manner ; spent much of their Time in Prayer and Praise ; and, probably, while engaged in Prayer, forgot not to entreat particularly for their cruel Keeper ; which I shall chuse to consider as another Occasion, or Means, of his *Conversion* ; not without good Grounds for it, as we shall hear.

3. While *Paul* and *Silas* were thus Christianly employed, “ there was suddenly a great Earthquake,” the Consequences of which struck the *Jailor* with no small Terror, and put him upon a desperate Resolution to destroy his own Life. *Ver.* 26, 27. But

4. That rash impious Design of his was providentially frustrated, by Means of the two excellent Persons whom he had treated so shamefully but a little before. *Ver.* 28. — And

5. As he was mercifully restrained from Self-Murder, while unconverted and very unfit to die, so his Terror, and Concern about some temporary Damage he might suffer, was turned into a much more reasonable and happy Concern about his spiritual Interests; as we find, *Ver. 29, 30.*

6. Hereupon *Paul* and *Silas* preach the Gospel to him, and direct him to Faith on *Christ*, as an infallible Means of Salvation, *ver. 31.* "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," said they to the awak'ned, humbled *Jailor*, "and thou shalt be saved, and thy House;" with which Proclamation of Gospel Grace, "the Lord opened his Heart," as we shall hear, thereby directing, perswading, and enabling him to embrace *Jesus Christ*, freely offered to him by infinite Mercy. —Of these *Preparatives* to the *Jailor's* Conversion I treat in their Order.

One Means of it, or Preparative to it, was the *Imprisonment* of *Paul* and *Silas*, the Circumstances of which are related, *ver. 23, 24.* "When they had laid many Stripes upon them, they cast them into Prison, charging the *Jailor* to keep them safely: who having received such a Charge, thrust them into the inner Prison, and made their Feet fast in the Stocks." Where observe (1.) The Quality of the Persons spoken of as ill treated. (2.) The ill Treatment itself they were obliged to suffer. (3.) The Parties concerned therein. (4.) The Reasons of God's permitting it to be so.

1. The Persons here spoken of, as ill treated and persecuted, were good Men, eminent Christians, faithful, diligent, indefatigable Preachers of the Word; as to whom a merciful and jealous God says, *He that toucheth you, toucheth the Apple of mine Eye* *. And, *He that despiseth you, de-*

* Zech. ii. 8.

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spiseth me *; They who persecute them who are *Christ's*, persecute *Christ* himself. — The People of God are the excellent ones of this Earth. They are his *Children, Spouse, Friends, Jewels*. So near and dear are they to *Christ*, that if an ungodly Herd was guilty of nothing worse than slighting *them*, or neglecting to perform proper Offices of Kindness for them, for *that* the great Judge would condemn them. Yet such as these, and the very best of them, may be despised, disdained, oppressed, and most ignominiously treated, by an ignorant, proud, malicious World; as their great LORD himself, while here on Earth, was. 1 *John* iii. 1. *Matth.* x. 24, 25.

2. The ill Treatment which these excellent Persons met with at *Philippi* was *various*. For they had many stripes laid on them; *then* they were thrust into Prison, and being committed to the keeping of a *wicked and unreasonable Man*, they were treated by him, as we are told, *ver.* 24. Now this Treatment of such eminently good Men as *Paul* and *Silas*, was (1.) To a great degree *barbarous* and *unjust*. For what had they done to deserve such Usage? They had preached the Gospel, laboured for the Good of Souls, like their great Master gone up and down doing Good. Now this Work and Labour of Love, GOD is so gracious as to accept. *Hebr.* vi. 10. But what GOD is well pleased with, the *Devil* is enraged at; and *them* whom he can influence, he will stir up to oppose and persecute it. Persecutors of the Servants and Ministers of *Christ*, are Factors and Agents for the Devil. Christians of the eminentest Piety and Usefulness have been, above others, the Butts and Marks of *his* Malice. “The faithful” and most righteous Pillars of the Church (says “*Clement of Rome* †) have suffered Persecution;

* *Luke* x. 16. † *Epist.* ad *Corinth.* Sect. 5.

“ even to a cruel Death. *Peter* endured a Variety of Labours, and then suffered Martyrdom. “ *Paul* was imprisoned seven Times, scourged, “ stoned; and having preached the Word, not “ only in the East, but to the utmost Bounds of “ the West *, he was at length put to death,” &c. How unreasonable was all this! One of the seven Imprisonments pointed at by *Clement* was this at *Philippi*, where the Apostle and his Companion were, in several Respects, shamefully treated. 1 *Thess.* ii. 2. (2.) These Sufferings of theirs were on some Accounts grievous to them, For tho’ these good Men were far from being unwilling to suffer for *Christ*, they were hereby debarred from their publick Work. *Hebr.* xiii. 18, 19. —But they found that tho’ “ they suffered as evil “ doers, even unto Bonds, yet the Word of God “ was not bound.” 2 *Tim.* ii. 9. The Work of the Gospel went on with encouraging Success. For their Imprisonment was an Occasion of the Conversion of the *Jailor*. They were committed to *his* Keeping, to make Way for his being an Hearer of the Gospel from these Prisoners of *his*.

* As he says this of *Paul* by Way of Distinction from *Peter*, without hinting the like of *him*, it looks as tho’ he had no Notion of *Peter*’s having visited *Rome*; the first Dreamer about which, that we know of, was one *Papias*, of the II^d Century, a good Man it may be, but extremely fanciful and credulous. Yet following Writers (*Irenæus*, &c.) were too ready to hearken to his Conceits, as *Eusebius*, in regard to some other Matters, frankly acknowledges. *Ecclesiast. Hist.* l. iii. c. 39. Probably, the Apostle *Peter* never set Footing in *Europe*; but spent his last Years, and suffered Martyrdom, in Parts far eastward from thence; as *Lightfoot* solidly argues, *Vol.* I. p. 1192, &c. I only observe thereupon, that as the *Babylon* spoken of 1 *Pet.* v. 13, was not *Rome*, so neither was it the old *Babylon* seated on the *Euphrates*, as *Lightfoot* seems to have supposed, but *Seleucia* on the *Tigris*, which succeeded the other in Dignity and Name; as *Dr Prideaux* observes in his *Connection*, &c. Part i. Book 8.

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3. The Parties concerned in this Persecution, were the Magistrates of *Philippi*, and the *Jailor*; whose Conduct, as related in the Text, might invite us to compare *him*, as a forward active Persecutor, with *Saul* the Pharisee, afterwards *Paul* the Christian, Minister, Apostle. “*Saul* breathing out Threatnings and Slaughter against the Disciples of the Lord, went unto the High-Priest, and desired of him Letters to *Damascus* — that if he he found any of this Way — he might bring them bound to *Jerusalem*.” *Acts* ix. 1, 2. He did not stay till the High-Priest sent for *him*; but he went to the High-Priest, who, tho’ malicious enough, was not, it seems, quite so forward and zealous in the persecuting Way, as this *Saul*. So, the cruel, oppressive Magistrates at *Philippi*, were rather out-done in persecuting Zeal, by the *Jailor*, who doubtless thought of this active Cruelty of his afterwards with Sorrow, Shame, and Self-loathing, according to that Promise, *Ezek.* xxxvi. 31. “Then shall ye remember your own evil Ways, and your Doings that were not good; and shall loath yourselves in your own Sight, for your Iniquities and for your Abominations.” That Promise was verified particularly in the Apostle *Paul*, (*1 Cor.* xv. 9. *1 Tim.* i. 13, 15.) and without all Question in the *Philippian Jailor* too.

4. The Reasons of God’s permitting the excellent ones of this Earth to be so grievously afflicted and persecuted, as *Paul* and *Silas* were, are these following. (1.) He orders it for their *Trial*; and not only the Discovery, but the strengthening of their Graces. “Tribulation worketh Patience.” *Rom.* v. 3. *James* i. 2, 3. The Faith and Patience of God’s Servants, by Means of *Exercise*, are improved; which renders trying Afflictions, and

and painful Exercises of one kind or another; needful, and desirable. 1 *Pet.* i. 6, 7. — (2.) God so orders it for manifesting the Power of his upholding Grace. 2 *Cor.* iv. 8, 9, 10. “ We “ are troubled on every Side, yet not distressed; “ persecuted but not forsaken—always bearing “ about in the Body, the Dying of the Lord “ *Jesus*, that the Life also of *Jesus*” (his being now alive in Heaven, and his being the Living God) “ might be made manifest in our Body. “ For we who live,” (are supported under such grievous Trials as happen to us) “ are always “ delivered unto Death for *Jesus*’ Sake, that the “ Life also of *Jesus* might be made manifest in our “ mortal Flesh.” 2 *Cor.* iv. 10, 11. — (3.) God suffers his dear Children to be not only defamed and slighted, but grievously afflicted, and cruelly persecuted, to convince *all* of a future Judgment. 2 *Thess.* i. 4, 5. “ We glory of you in the “ Churches of God, for your Patience and Faith “ in all your Persecutions, and Tribulations that “ ye endure, which (enduring of Tribulations by such as ye are) “ is a manifest Token of the “ righteous Judgment of God;” a plain Proof of God’s intending to judge the World in Righteousness, and to render to all according to their Works. (4.) God may do it, for promoting the Conversion of some Sinners or other, as well as for encouraging and confirming the Weaker of sincere Believers. “ The Blood of Martyrs (as has “ been long since observed) is the Seed of the “ Church.” — The more God’s People *Israel* were afflicted in *Egypt*, the more they multiplied and grew. *Exod.* i. 12. — “ I would have you under- “ stand” (said the Apostle to the *Philippians*. chap. i. 12, 13, 14.) “ that the Things which “ happened unto me, have fallen out rather unto “ the Furtherance of the Gospel: So that my

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“ Bonds in CHRIST are manifest in all the Palace,
 “ and in all other Places: And many of the Bre-
 “ thren in the Lord waxing confident by my
 “ Bonds, are much more bold to speak the Word
 “ without Fear.” The *Conversion*, and *Suf-
 ferings* of the great Apostle; each of these fur-
 nishes a Proof of the Resurrection of *Jesus*, and
 the divine Original of the Gospel, or the Truth
 of the Christian Revelation. If what is told us
 upon these Heads is true, the Christian Doctrine
 preached, propagated, and suffered for by the
 Apostle, can't be false. And “ therefore did he
 “ endure all Things for the Elects Sake, that
 “ they, *as well as himself*, might obtain the Sal-
 “ vation which is in *Christ Jesus*, with eternal
 “ Glory.” 2 *Tim.* ii. 10. Many of the People of
 God, both *Jews* and *Gentiles*, were converted,
 comforted, confirmed, by Means of the Suffer-
 ings and Labours of that greatest and best of
 meer Men, the Apostle *Paul*.

I conclude, upon this first Branch of the
 Jailor's History, with two Words.

1. If such good Men as those spoken of in the
 Text, suffered so grievously, and God permitted it
 to be so, what will become of the Wicked and
 Ungodly? To this Purpose the Apostle *Peter*
 argues. 1 *Pet.* iv. 17, 18.

2. If such barbarous hard-hearted Wretches as
 this *Jailor* find Mercy with God, why may not
 the vilest among *us* obtain Forgiveness, and ex-
 perience the Power of sovereign Grace, if brought
 to a Sense of what we have done, a Condem-
 nation of ourselves for it, and a Resolution to
 continue seeking for the promised Grace of the
 New Covenant, which is pardoning, sanctifying,
 confirming, saving Grace. All this, God has
 promis'd: All this, you and I want, as much as
 any other: All this, we, equally with others, are
 invited

invited to be earnest with God for: And why may not our Desires and Hopes, be excited by the Example of the *Jailor*, who was once “ a “ Blasphemer, a Persecutor, and an injurious Person; but he obtained Mercy, and the Grace of “ our Lord was exceeding abundant towards him,” as for other Reasons, so particularly, to direct and encourage the very worst of Sinners earnestly to *desire* promised Mercies, and earnestly desiring them to *seek after* them, and continue pleading for them.

I now go on to another Part of the *History* before us; the *Behaviour* of those good Men, *Paul* and *Silas*, when imprisoned for the Gospel. How did these Prisoners of Jesus Christ spend their Time, when so closely confined? We are told *ver. 25.* Their Behaviour was most exemplary and admirable. No suffering Servants of CHRIST could have spent their Time better. For “ at Midnight, they prayed and sang Praises to “ God, and the Prisoners heard them.”

1. The *Exercises*, which they engaged in, were *Sacred*, and of the best kind that could be. They *prayed, and sang Praises to God*, or, as the Original has it, They *praying praised God*. So that this Passage is not so well adapted, as some others, to prove *singing of Psalms and Hymns* a distinct Part of instituted Worship. However, 'tis evident from some other Texts, (1.) That singing with the Voice, distinctly from Prayer, is an Ordinance of God. *Ephes. v. 19. Coloss. iii. 16. Jam. v. 13.* — (2.) That vocal singing is to be performed solitarily and socially, by a single Person alone (*Jam. v. 13.*) or by several in Conjunction. (3.) That Prayer and singing of Psalms are different in several Respects. For (1.) *Prayer* is of such a Nature as to be compleatly, and *best*, performable, without the Use of a precomposed Form, or a premeditated Set of Words; which

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singing of Psalms and Hymns is not. (2.) When we *pray*, it concerns us to pour out *our own* Hearts before God. For so is Prayer described. *Psal.* lxii. 8. "Trust in him at all Times ye People; "pour out your Hearts before him." With the Heart man *believeth*, and from the Heart he *prayeth*. But we may *sing*, and that seriously, sincerely, profitably, even when the *Psal*m or *Hymn* made use of, is not expressive of, or exactly suited to, our own particular Case. Is every Thing we read, or talk over, expressive of our own Sentiments, Desires, Affections; as what we speak in *Prayer* ought to be? Neither is it so in *singing*; which, as performed in a joint social Way, the Apostle expresses by *speaking with one another in Psalms, Hymns, and spiritual Songs*. (3.) *Prayer* is to the serious, and well-disposed, much easier than *singing*; a Duty more practicable in all Cases, and of more constant Obligation. — *Singing* is less easy, as having more of human Art and Skill in the regular Performance of it. — However, each of them is an Ordinance of CHRIST; and they do very well together, *sometimes* *. And *both* might be performed by *Paul* and *Silas* in the Prison. The Original forbids not this Supposition. — But 2. The *Manner* of their engaging in these sacred Exercises, is to be taken Notice of. They *pray'd* and *prais'd*, so as to be heard by the other Prisoners. This shows, they were courageous and undaunted: They were not discouraged by their Sufferings: They could suffer for CHRIST

* The antient Christians were much taken with singing of Psalms and Hymns, which they practised not only in Publick, but when alone, at their Meals, at Work. This is attested by *Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Jerom, &c.* But, if there was Room for it, it might be shown, that Singing was not so frequently and earnestly insisted on by the Pious Antients, as secret Prayer, reading the Scripture, and Meditation.

willingly and joyfully : They were not ashamed of acting in Character, as Disciples and Ministers of CHRIST : They feared not the Wrath or Ridicule of Men. So that they might say as, *2 Tim. i. 7.* " God has not given us the Spirit " of Fear ; but of Power, and of Love, and of a " sound Mind. " — We are not always called, when we pray, to speak *audibly*. The God, whom we have to do with, expects every Day to hear from us in Secret. *Matth. vi. 6.* " When " thou prayest, enter into thy Closet, and when " thou hast shut thy Door, pray to thy Father, " who is in Secret, and thy Father, who seeth in " Secret, will reward thee openly. " And, in some other Cases, *Privacy* is to be affected, as much as the Nature of this, and that good Work will admit of. *Matth. vi. 1, 3, 16, 17.* Yet we are forbidden to be ashamed of the Truths, or Ways of Christ, in the corruptest Times. *Mark viii. 38. Philip. ii. 15.* If our Lot is cast among a crooked and perverse People, we are commanded to " shine " among them as Lights in the World, hold- " ing forth the Word of Life. " While many are not ashamed or afraid to swear, to talk profanely, &c. we should be as little ashamed or afraid to pray, to sing the Praises of God, to discourse of divine Things, to make an open Profession of Christ in every Way appointed by him : Nay, we should be ashamed and afraid to live in the Neglect of such Exercises as these, or any one Ordinance of CHRIST.

3. The Time at which these good Men were thus religiously employed is remarkable. It was at *Midnight*. Now this might seem *unseasonable*. But as Ministers are directed, (*2 Tim. iv. 2.*) to preach the Word not only *in Season*, but *out of Season* ; so they, and others too, may be called, or providentially directed, to pray, praise, or perform

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form some other good Work, at Times ordinarily improper. In Times of Persecution, good People have been glad to meet together for religious Exercises, whenever they could. And we have read, or heard, of eminent Servants of God being occasionally stirred up, or strongly inclined, to what might seem *out of Time*, and ordinarily was so. Now this might be the Case, of *Paul* and *Silas* in the Prison at *Philippi*. While others were asleep, or usually disposed for taking Rest, *they* might be prompted, by the good Spirit of God, to exercise themselves in Prayer and Praise, and that *audibly*, for giving the other Prisoners an Opportunity of hearing, what, by the Blessing of God, might prove instructive and beneficial to them, and disposing them the better to consider what was immediately to follow. The *Psalmist* could say, *Psal.* cxix. 62. "At Midnight I will rise to give Thanks unto thee, because of thy righteous Judgments." And the *Apostle*, on a certain Occasion, preaching to the Disciples of *Troas*, "continued his Discourse until Midnight." *Acts* xx. 7. So strong and active were his sacred Zeal, and brotherly Love! Indeed, there never lived upon Earth a more Christ-like Man, or a more faithful, zealous, active, indefatigable Labourer in the Lord's Harvest, than this *Apostle* *; the Joy

* Very grand Encomiums of this *Apostle* are given by *Clement*, *Polycarp*, *Irenæus*, and other Antients, some of whom say such Things as are plainly inconsistent with the pretended Supremacy of *Peter*. *Clement* of *Rome* speaking of *Peter* and *Paul*, (he does not say *St Peter* and *St Paul*, which Way of speaking, how modish so ever now, was not Primitive, but began several Centuries after Christ) gives great Commendations of the former, but greater of the latter. *Origen* expressly calls *Paul* the greatest of the *Apostles*. *Chrysostom* in a Discourse on these two *Apostles*, says, I love all

and Thankfulness of whose Spirit, even when a close Prisoner, vented itself, we may reasonably presume, in fervent Thanksgivings for the supporting Consolations of divine Grace, the former Successes of his Ministry, and the very great Honour he was now promoted to, in being called to suffer Pain and Disgrace for the Name of CHRIST. And as his *praising of God* included such *Thanksgivings* as these in it, so 'tis highly probable, I had almost said 'tis certain, that when engaged in Prayer, with his Companion *Silas*, He neglected not to implore Mercy for the *Jailor*. His Love to Christ, his Regard to the Reputation of the Gospel, and his Compassion for perishing Souls, each of these generous Principles of Christian, Ministerial, Conduct, exerted itself in forgiving, affectionate, and humbly confident Petitions for the Conversion of that ignorant, malicious, thoughtless Man; which, though the History does not express so much, may, I think, be fairly argued and made out thus. Some of the Lessons that CHRIST teaches are these, "Love your
 " Enemies, bless them who curse you, do good
 " to them who hate you, and pray for them
 " who despitefully use you and persecute you." *Matth. v. 44.* Now these Lessons it becomes all practically to learn, and the Children of God do so in some Measure: For it is added, *ver. 45.* "That ye may be the Children of your Father
 " who is in Heaven." The Children of God, *then*, love their Enemies: They are, Friends to all, of a forgiving Spirit, and long after the spiritual Welfare of their spitefulest Persecutors. So did *Stephen*, *Acts vii. 59.* and so undoubtedly did *Paul* and *Silas*. *Paul* was a Christian, and

all the Saints, but especially blessed *Paul* — that Guide of the Spouse of Christ. *Irenæus* calls *Peter* and *Paul* most glorious Apostles, without any Preference of the former.

Minister

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Minister of the first Rank. His Love to Christ, and the Souls of Men, Enemies not excepted, were almost singular. Mind what he says, *Rom. ix. 2, 3. 1 Cor. iv. 12, 13.* and then judge whether, when imprisoned at *Philippi*, and engaged in solemn Prayer, He could forget his persecuting Keeper; whose Conversion, in that it followed so speedily on the *Praying* pointed at in the Text, 'tis reasonable to look upon it as an Answer thereto. If *Stephen's* praying took Effect in the Conversion of *Saul* the Pharisee, as is commonly supposed; why might not the Conversion of the *Jailor* be considered as an Effect of the affectionate praying of *Paul* and *Silas*; whose most exemplary Behaviour, as here recorded, directs us to reflect as follows?

1. Did *Paul* and *Silas*, tho' arrived at Eminency in Grace, and assured of their Interest in *Christ*, addict themselves to *Prayer*; what then are we to judge of prayerless Persons, or those Hearers, and Professors, who don't habituate themselves to secret Converses with God by *Prayer*? That they are dead in Sin, and, to God. Nay, that corrupt Nature is strong in them, and they are far from the Kingdom of God. — *1 Tim. v. 5, 6.* "She that is a Widow indeed — trusteth
" in God, and continueth in Supplications and
" Prayers Night and Day. But she who liveth
" in Pleasure is dead while she liveth." — Some were more addicted to *Prayer formerly* than *now*. This is a Sign of *Decays*, and what the Love of the World, not watched against, makes us in Danger of. Some will cry to God, when his Hand is upon them. *Isai. xxvi. 16.* But a Principle of Religion, teaches us "to pray always, and not to faint." The Word invites us, and the good Spirit constrains us, to pray, How? According to the Will, or Promises of God;
often,

often ; with Earnestness of Concern ; and with an humble Confidence in God. 1 *Thess.* v. 17. *Colos.* iv. 2. *Rom.* viii. 26, 27.

2. Did *Paul* and *Silas* pray, and sing Praises together ; This may teach us to incline to Christian Communion ; and it shows us, that good Men will act in Character, tho' frowned upon and persecuted ; as also, what the gracious comforting Presence of God capacitates for : It strengthens a praying Disposition ; it disposes for giving Thanks in every Condition of Life ; it enables us to " rejoice in the Lord always," raises our Hearts far above the World, and makes us chuse, above all Things, to live in Fellowship with *Christ* and his, here and hereafter.

3. Did these good Men pray and praise, *so as to be heard*, chusing to do so, and stirred up by a Concern for the Good of others ; Let this speak Reproof to the lukewarm Professors, who are neglectful of the Souls of others, and, in Apology for their sinful, scandalous, Neglects, plead, that if such and such belong to God, He will bring them home, and Almighty Grace alone can turn their Hearts. What perverse arguing this is, you are often told. At present, I only oppose thereto the exemplary Behaviour of *Paul* and *Silas*, who having the wicked *Jailor's* Conversion at Heart, set themselves to pray earnestly for him, not without a Readiness to preach *Christ* to him, and, in every Way proper, to labour for bringing about the desired Change, of this stupid enraged Enemy to *Christ* and them.

4. Were these Prisoners of *Jesus Christ* so intent on Prayer and Praise, and so zealous for social Worship, and Communion with God thereby, that Stripes, Imprisonment, and the closest Confinement, could not restrain them from the Exercises they did so much delight in, or hinder
C their

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their engaging in them even *at Midnight*; Let this dispose us, rather than neglect the proper Exercises of the Christian Life, to perform them *unseasonably*. As Ministers are to preach, so Christians are to hear, pray, speak of the Things of God, visit the Afflicted, &c. *out of Season* sometimes; esteeming it better to forget our ordinary Business, Ease, &c. than to neglect God, our precious Souls, or the spiritual Interests of others. This the Scripture recommends, as the generous Spirit and Temper of *Christ* and his Followers. *Rom. xv. 2, 3. Philip. ii. 3, 4, 5, &c.* It was the generous Temper particularly of *Paul* and *Silas*, whose kind Entreaties for a furious blind Persecutor were accepted, and soon began to be answered, when “ suddenly there was a great “ *Earth-quake*, so that the Foundations of the “ Prison were shaken; and immediately all the “ Doors were opened, and every one’s Bands “ were loosed: And the Keeper of the Prison “ awaking out of his Sleep, and seeing the Prison “ Doors open, he drew out his Sword, and “ would have killed himself, supposing that the “ Prisoners had been fled.” In which Part of the History observe,

1. The awful Event spoken of, a great *Earth-quake*. The Scripture tells us of divers *Earth-quakes* *. To mention them distinctly would be needless. *Earthquakes* are among those threatened Judgments of God, that he has sent, sometimes, to affright and punish the Enemies of his Church, and the Sinners in *Zion*. *1 Sam. xiv. 15. Amos i. 1.* That mentioned by *Amos* was so memorable and awful, that it was occasionally pointed at, many Years after. *Zech. xiv. 5.* But how terrible Among these I don’t reckon the *Σεισμος* spoken of *Math. xxviii. 2.* Which seems to have been a remarkable Agitation of the Air, rather than an Earthquake.

rible *soever *Earth-quakes* generally are, some of them have been sent as Tokens of God's special Presence with his worshipping Servants, and for ushering in, or accompanying, some very great and remarkable Event; in which Cases, they may have struck the Minds of People with some kind of Awe, but Providence has restrained them from doing Mischief. *1 Kings* xix. 4, 12. *Acts* iv. 31. *Exod.* xix. 18. *Matth.* xxvii. 50, 51. That most wonderful *Earthquake* at the Death of CHRIST, was a Token of GOD's tremendous Displeasure with his Murderers; and as it accompanied the most astonishing Event that could be, the SON OF GOD dying on a Cross; so it might betoken the intended Subversion of the Legal Dispensation (which had likewise been presignified by the *Earthquake* that shook Mount *Sinai* when the Law was there published, *Hebr.* xii. 26.) and Providence might order it for helping somewhat towards the Conversion of those worst Enemies of CHRIST the *Jews*. Some were affrighted thereby, *Matth.* xxvii. 54. Nay, whereas CHRIST prayed for his Murderers, *Luke* xxiii. 34. That Prayer of his began to take Effect presently, when, (*ver.* 48.) "Many of the People beholding what was done, smote their Breasts and returned." In like Manner, the *Earthquake* spoken of in the Text, was an Indication of God's powerful Presence with, and merciful Acceptance of, his praying praising Servants in the Prison. They honoured him by the Actings of Faith, Love, Thankfulness, Submission, Compassion for the *Jailor*, and he would honour *them* by testifying his Acceptance of their Praises and Petitions, in this remarkable Way.

2. The *Time* of this *Earthquake* is to be observed by us. It fell out *suddenly*, immediately on the praying and praising aforementioned. — Compare

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this with *Acts* iv. 31. "When they" the Apostles "had prayed, the Place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." So *Paul* and *Silas* having prayed and sang Praises together in the Prison, the Place was shaken in token of God's merciful Audience and Acceptance. "Suddenly there was a great Earthquake, so that the Foundations of the Prison were shaken."

3. The *Consequences* of this were these. (1.) A loosing the Bands of the Prisoners, and throwing open the Prison Doors, so that *Paul*, *Silas*, and the other Prisoners, might have escaped. (2.) An awaking the *Jailor* out of his Sleep, and causing him to rise in a great Fright, from an Apprehension of the Prisoners having escaped, and his Liableness to be questioned thereupon; which put him on a desperate Resolution against his own Life; as to which *Resolution* of his, I would briefly note four Things.

1. The *Ground* of it. He supposed that the Prisoners had got away, and he dreaded the Consequences of *that*. For, as yet, he had no just Sense of Eternity upon his Mind: He dreaded the Anger of Men more than the Wrath of God; which is the Case of many, whose *Fear*, if affrighted and distressed, is neither a filial Fear of God, nor a Dread of his hot Displeasure, but a terrible Apprehension of some temporary Calamities as likely to overtake them.

2. The *Folly* of it. For hereby he brought himself to Death's Door, and the Mouth of the Pit. When he drew his Sword with a Design of Self-Murder, he was as near Hell as could be, without actually falling into it.

3. The *Wickedness* of it. For Life being the Gift of God, none have any Authority to take it away, but the great Donor himself, or they who

who are commissioned by him. *Job* i. 21. CHRIST indeed, could say, "I have Power to lay down my own Life, and to take it again." But, He was more than a Man, even the Son of God, and GOD: Otherwise he could have had no such Authority over his human Life as he there professes. — Our Business is to do whatever we can for preserving the Life that GOD has lent us, and to continue waiting for a Dismission from the Toils and Fatigues of it, till our great Change shall come. *Job* xiv. 14. *James* i. 12.

4. The rich Mercy of GOD in preventing the Execution of it. The rash wicked Design of this, now, affrighted, distressed Man, was happily frustrated; and the *Instruments* were those very Prisoners whom he had raged against but just before. — Thus was GOD merciful at once to his persecuted Servants, and to this wicked *Jailor*; to the former, in vouchsafing them the Honour and Pleasure of subserving the Designs of Providence in regard to the *Latter*, and to him in snatching him from the brink of Destruction, temporal and everlasting. — So that, by way of Preparation for the *Conversion* of this Persecutor and Self-Murderer, there was a two-fold merciful Appearance of GOD for him: The Prisoners being restrained from attempting to escape, when they wanted not an Opportunity of doing it; and his being prevented from actually destroying his own Life. This, now, began to work on his hard relentless Heart. Neither the *Earthquake* nor *this*, did immediately make a Convert of him, but it made Way for his being awakned, humbled, and converted. For *Paul* having cried with a loud Voice (as earnestly concerned to divert him from his wicked Purpose) "do thyself no harm, for we are all here", then it was that "he called for a Light, and
"sprang

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“sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before *Paul* and *Silas*, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, What must I do to be saved?” Where let us observe (1.) The Terror and Distress he was now reduced to. (2.) His very respectful Behaviour towards *Paul* and *Silas*. (3.) The most important Question which he put to them.

1. The Terror and Distress he was now in. *He came trembling.* What was it that he was now struck with so great a Dread of? Not the *Earthquake*; or the Prisoners escaping; or being questioned by Men; or any temporal Calamity that might befall him: But the present Object of his Fear was the *Wrath* of a Sin avenging God, which he had clear Views of his immediate Liableness to, and the extreme Dreadfulness of. Not that he was left to *despair*: Neither was his Terror of any long Continuance: But, for the present, he was in no small Distress; and felt an inward Terror which, to this Time, he had lived a perfect Stranger to. — Here, by the Way, I would propound and briefly answer two Questions.

Q. 1. Do great Terrors, and Distresses of Conscience, always precede, or accompany, the Conversion of a Sinner?

R. No. A Sinner *must* be convinced of Sin, and brought to reflect on his Sinfulness and Misery without CHRIST: But at the Instant of such Convictions, or immediately thereupon, the Lord may open his Heart, and therewith either raise him to a comforting Hope, or so far encourage him, now sincerely closing with CHRIST, as to preserve him from desponding Apprehensions. Many a true Convert is unable to recollect a Time when he was terrified, and then turned to God, or first *wounded* and then *healed*.

Q. 2. Do great Terrors and Distresses, as to the State of our Souls, prove a Work of Grace begun? Or are they to be looked upon as sufficient Evidences of a saving Change?

R. No. A Sinner continuing unconverted may tremble before God, or in the Views of a future Judgment. This is evident from the Case of the *Devils*, who believe and tremble (*James* ii. 19.) and from the Fearfulness that hath surprised even *Hypocrites*. (*Isa.* xxxiii. 14. *Jerem.* xxxvi. 16.) Let us not rest, therefore in *legal Convictions* and *Terrors*: But let us learn to distinguish the Terrors of an awakned unregenerate Conscience from the truly good Man's trembling at the Word of God (*Isa.* lxvi. 2. *Prov.* xiii. 13. *Psal.* cxix. 161. *Ezra* ix. 4. *Chap.* x. 3.) which respects not only the Threatnings of God's Word, but the Commands and Promises of it; and carries in it, together with a Sense of Guilt, and a Dread of divine Wrath, an Unwillingness to offend God, and an abiding ingenuous Concern to love God supremely, to serve him acceptably, to grow in Grace, and to become more and more fit for *Heaven*, as a State of spotless Purity, and everlasting Communion with the most Holy One. — But to return to the *Tailor*, as to *whom* we are next to observe,

2. His very respectful Behaviour towards *Paul* and *Silas*. This is set forth in two or three Particulars.

1. *He fell down before them*; not with an intent to worship them, but in Token of a singular Regard and Veneration for them as good Men, as excellent Ministers of God, and capable of directing him in the Way of Salvation. Such, indeed, they were; and God intending Mercy for this awakned Prodigal, put it into his Heart to esteem them, and to apply to them, as such. —

Whom

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Whom should the Sick consult, or apply to, but some skilful faithful Physician?

2. *He brought them out*, and that without staying for an Order from the Magistrates, who had committed them to his Custody; which shows, that being now impressed with an Awe of God, and a distressing Sense of Sin, he was less fearful of the Anger of Men, and more thoughtful about his spiritual than his temporal Interests. An awful Sense of God upon the Mind, makes all worldly Objects appear despicable; and considerably abates our Fears of what Man may do against us. *Heb. xi. 27.* — A distressing Sense of Sin, will lessen our dread of, and concern for, temporal Calamities. When the SPIRIT of God, opens the Understanding of one who has lived in gross Ignorance, awakens him to a Concern about his eternal State, and holds him to a Consideration of what he has been doing, what follows? A Forgetfulness of the Concerns of the World for the present, and a moderated Regard to them ever afterwards. *John iv. 28, 14.*

3. He spoke to them in the Language of Respect and Submission. The Word we render *Sirs*, does really carry in it *Authority*, or some Degree of Superiority. It implies, therefore, *Submission*, on the Part of the Speaker. Yet *Custom*, which is pretty much the Governess of Speech, has established the Use of it so far, as that 'tis often used by Equals and Superiors. And *Insincerity*, which is essential to *modern Complaisance*, oft uses it without the least Degree of Submission, or ordinary Respect. However, as *Insincerity* in speaking, is no less blameable than *Hypocrisy* in acting, so we may reasonably believe the *Jailor* was sincere, both in his Behaviour, and in his Manner of speaking, to these good Men. As he treated them with what Kind-

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ness he could at present, so he bespake them both civilly and submissively. Had they been the greatest Persons upon Earth, he could not have behaved towards them in a more respectful, submissive Manner than he now did; when he *fell down before them*, as by much his Superiors and Betters; *brought them out*, as far from deserving the least Degree of painful Confinement; and spake to them as in the Text. What a Difference was there between the Jailor's Conduct towards *Paul* and *Silas*, before, and at the Time of, his Conversion! Compare *ver. 23, 24*, with *ver. 29, 30*. This *Wolf*, then, was now becoming a *Lamb*. In him, consequently, was verified that Old Testament Description of the Power of renewing Grace. *Isa. xi. 6, 7, 9, 10*. Wherever the Gospel comes with a converting, renewing Efficacy, it cools the hot spirited; meekens the fierce and turbulent; humbles the proud and arrogant; disposes Sinners of every Quality to become the Lamb-like Followers of CHRIST, and to put on Bowels of Compassion for the afflicted Servants of CHRIST, and to cherish a sincere, cordial Affection, as for good People in general, so particularly for them whom they have Reason to consider as sent from CHRIST. Such a Change as *this* began to take place in the Heart of the Jailor, when "he called for a Light, and sprang in," &c. *He calls for a Light*, which intimates to us (1.) That he had some at his Beck or Command. (2.) That what is here related was transacted in the Night-Time; consequently the Change wrought on this cruel Man was sudden. *He sprang in*, This intimates the present Perturbation and Hurry of his Thoughts. *He came trembling*, &c. To whom did he now come? To the Men whom he had so madly persecuted the Evening before. To them he came, how? *Trembling*, full of a Sense of

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Guilt, Horror of Conscience, and a Concern for what he had done. In what Posture did he present himself? In that of an humble Supplicant. *He fell down before them*; in doing which he might seem to exceed the Bounds of religious Decency. For did not his falling down before these good Ministers of CHRIST look like *Idolatry*, the very Appearance of which is blamable? But supposing he did go too far, did transgress the strict Bounds of a religious *Decorum*, it was at present somewhat excusable, considering (1.) What an ignorant Idolater he had hitherto been. (2.) What a Disorder of Mind he was now in. (3.) What an extraordinary Respect he conceived for these eminently good Men. Let us compare this Account of the Jailor, with *Acts x. 25. Cornelius met Peter*, fell at his Feet, and worshipped him, not religiously, but with an uncommon civil Veneration; which, however, the humble Apostle protested against, as carrying in it too much of a Shew of sinful Creature Adoration. You will say, But we read of no such Check given to the *Jailor*. However, such an Hint of Reproof might be given; and supposing it was not so, *that* might be owing to the very different Circumstances of this now trembling *Jailor* from those of *Cornelius*. For (1.) The *Jailor* had been accustomed to Idol Worship, which *Cornelius* had not; and Sinners called out of gross Darkness, may not be instantly convinced of every notable Mistake, or corrupt superstitious Practice. (2.) *Cornelius*, when he met *Peter*, might not be so disordered as the *Jailor* now was, and therefore more capable of setting a Guard on his external Behaviour. If the *Jailor* was really excessive in the Manner of his Address to *Paul* and *Silas*, and yet had no Check, for the Present, on account of it; this teaches us, that the HOLY

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SPIRIT's working on the Hearts of Sinners, may be attended with notable Weakness and Imperfections; *that* convinced awakned Persons may mean well, may have a good Work of God begun on their Souls, and yet act weakly, inconsiderately, blamably in some Particulars; notwithstanding which, wise, prudent, judicious Christians will think favourably of them, and be disposed to encourage them, rather than the contrary. Indeed, it becomes us to be tender of the Mistakes and Misconduct of awakned serious Persons, rather than severe in our Censures of them. So was CHRIST as to his own Disciples, while weak Beginners in Religion, (*Matth. ix. 14, 15.*) and so were *Paul* and *Silas* in respect to the trembling *Jailor*, who treated them with such an extraordinary Respect, though they were Prisoners, in mean, ignominious, external Circumstances, and owning them was not a little dangerous: Which brings to,

3. The most important Question propounded by him, *What shall I do to be saved?* Which is as tho' he had said, I desire you, whom I now look upon as the Ministers of God, to direct me what Course I am to take, for escaping the Misery which I discern myself to be obnoxious to, or for getting out of the most wretched State in which Sin has involved me. — The *Salvation* which comes by CHRIST, has for the Object of it every kind of *Evil*; every Thing that the wisest Persons would avoid, and that it is desirable for sinful Creatures to be delivered from. Now these *Evils* are of three kinds; Sin, the Troubles of this World, and the Wrath to come; of which three, the first mentioned is the proper procuring Cause of both the other. What is it that has brought so much Sorrow into the World, involved Mankind in a Liableness to Death, and exposed them to

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future endless Misery? *Sin*. The Salvation of the Gospel, then, must be a perfect Deliverance from *this*, and all the penal troublesome Consequences of it. — To be *fav'd*, therefore, it is (1.) To be forgiven by God. *Psal.* xxxii. 1. — (2.) To be converted, or made new Creatures. *2 Tim.* i. 9. *Tit.* iii. 5. — (3.) To be confirmed in a State of Grace. *Rom.* v. 2. — (4.) To be finally delivered from Sins and Sorrows of every Kind, and to be glorified in Soul and Body; which *Glorification* of the whole Man is frequently included in *Salvation*, but sometimes distinguished from it. *2 Tim.* ii. 10. — But tho' the *Salvation* of CHRIST amounts to thus much, it follows not that every one whom the SPIRIT of Grace works upon, is immediately brought to a distinct Consideration of all this, or that all awakned Persons are solicitous about the *Whole* of this compleat Gospel Salvation. A Sinner may cry out *What shall I do to be saved?* and mean no more than *this*: What Course must I take to escape Hell? Many, tho' awakned, have no just Sense upon their Minds of the Evil of Sin, as it dishonours God, and renders the Creature an Enemy to *him*: They grieve not for what they have done against *him*: They reflect not on their past evil Ways with self-loathing: But they cry out for Fear of Divine Wrath, and anxiously enquire, What is to be done for the avoiding of *this*? So that this Question in the Text, as put by some, is of the same Import, with that of the Sinners and Hypocrites in *Zion*. *Isa.* xxxiii. 14. "Who amongst us *can* dwell with the devouring Fire? Who amongst us *can* dwell with everlasting Burnings?" They don't cry out, "O how many are our Iniquities and Sins!" What a base Part have we acted in respect to God! But O how intolerable is his *Wrath*, and What must be

be done in Order to the escaping of *that*? — 'Tis usual with some vain Persons, for confirming what they assert, to say, "As we hope to be *" saved,"* meaning no more by being *saved,* than a being preserved from the future Misery which they have received some slight superficial Notion of, but think very little about. The Salvation of the Gospel, as being primarily a Salvation from *Sin*, they are ignorant of; or if they have some slight Conceptions of it, they have no real Hopes of it, no abiding Concern upon their Minds about it. And thus it may be with some, whose awakned Consciences make them cry out in the Words of the *Jailor*, or to speak with themselves to that Purpose. They are more fearful of the Torments of Hell, and more thoughtful about their future Welfare, than they once were, and than many are; but their Sollicitude and Concern extend no farther than an escaping the Punishment threatned, without an humbling Sense of *Sin*, or a just Dislike to *that*, or a Concern to get safe to Heaven in a Way honourable to God. Indeed, the common Cry of an awakned Conscience is, not, by what Means may I be saved from all my Uncleanesses, and get safe to that World, where holy, happy Souls live with *Christ*? But, what shall I do to be delivered from my present Fears, and future threatned Torments? — But, I would show a little more distinctly, what the putting such a Question as this in the Text, when it comes from the Heart, must include in it. Now when a poor Sinner, who has lived not only without a filial Regard to God, but without any distressing Concern about his future Welfare, is brought to cry out, or think with himself, to this Purpose, the least that he can intend is in the four or five Particulars following. (1.) A sense of Guilt, or just Liableness to divine Wrath. (2.) A Dread
of

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of Damnation. (3.) A Concern to escape it. (4.) A Willingness to do somewhat in order to it. (5.) Either Apprehensions of his being able to do what God will mercifully accept; or desires, and a Concern, to be assisted for it. To which I might add (6.) Some Dislike to Sin, as Damning, and Displeasure with himself as bent on Ways of Destruction. These Particulars, or what is equivalent, must be included in the Cry of every awakned Hearer of the Word. But when a thoughtless heedless Creature is brought to speak, or think, as in the Text, with a View to the whole Salvation of the Gospel, what such an one says, or thinks, with himself must include, (1.) Not only a Sense of Guilt, but a Sense of Sin as justly offensive, and abominable to God. (2.) A Dread not only of Damnation but of going on in Sin. (3) A Concern both to escape Hell, and to walk in the good Way leading to Heaven. (4.) A Willingness to attend on the Means that God has appointed, not only for escaping the Wrath to come, but to get his Iniquities subdued, to grow in Grace, &c. (5.) An Hope of being accepted, how heinous soever his Sins have been. (6.) A Dislike to Sin, as contrary to God.—These, I apprehend, were the Sentiments and Temper of the *Jailor*, when he cried out, *What shall I do to be saved?* Our Explication of which gives us Occasion to caution you against three dangerous Evils, a stupid Unconcernedness, desponding Thoughts, and a legal, or anti-evangelical Spirit.

I. Beware of a *stupid Unconcernedness* about your spiritual Interests. Forget not your fallen State, and endeavour to get a thorough Sight and Sense of the Miseries of such a State. Consider, what *Sin* is, how hateful in the Nature of it, how malignant in the Tendency of it,
how

how miserable in the Consequences of it, and what must be done for us in order to our Salvation from it. Let no secular Cares, or worldly Business, or sensual Gratifications, or carnal Projects and earthly Pursuits, make you forget, or hinder your entertaining many, daily, frequent Thoughts of, your Concern with God, Fall from him, Obligations and Duty to him.

2. When convinced, and awakned, don't give Way to *desponding Thoughts*. The History we are upon strongly forbids *that*; and so do many other Texts, and scripture Examples; *Manasseh*, *Mary Magdalen*, the Murderers of *Christ*, whose Conversion is recorded, *Acts* ii. and to name but one more, the Apostle *Paul*. Read his Account of himself, *1 Tim.* i. 13, 14, 15, 16. where, (1.) He recollects what he had been and done. *ver.* 13. *I was before a Blasphemer, a Persecutor, and injurious.* (2.) He signifies his very great Obligations to *Christ* and *Grace*. *ver.* 13, 14, 15. *I obtained Mercy — the Grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant — Christ Jesus came into the World to save Sinners, of whom I am Chief, or, as it might be rend'ed, a Chief, i. e. one of the chief.* — (3.) *That* he does, with an Hint of the inward Change that he experienced. *ver.* 14. "The Grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant in Faith and Love, &c." *i. e.* in bringing so vile a Wretch as I was, to believe on *Christ*, and love him with all my Heart, as I have infinite Occasion to do. (4.) He tells one End that God had in forgiving, and turning the Heart of, such a wretched Creature as he had been. *ver.* 16. *that in me, who am a Chief, (so it might be rend'ed, I think) Jesus Christ might shew forth all Long-Suffering, for a Pattern to them who should hereafter believe on him to Life everlasting.* Now all this might be applied to the *Sailor*, and from both

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both these scripture Examples, with several others, all who are sensible of their Sins, and spiritual Wants, may fetch Encouragement to desire, pray, and hope for, suitable promised Supplies.

3. Don't seek after Salvation with a *legal*, or *anti-evangelical Spirit*. Such a Question as this of the *Jailor* might be proposed with either a *legal* or an *evangelical Spirit*, and Temper. By a *legal Spirit*, I mean such an habitual Frame of Mind, as is suited to a being under a Covenant of Works. By an *Evangelical Spirit*, such a Temper, or habitual Frame of Mind, as is suited to a being "not under the Law but under Grace." The Voice of the Law as a Covenant is, "If thou wilt enter into Life, keep the Commandments:" And, Cursed is every one that keepeth not all the Commands of God perfectly and constantly: Which Tenor of the Law, as a Covenant, presupposed in Man, when originally made by God, an Ability to act accordingly, and to avert the Curse by his own Obedience. Now this being the Way of seeking Life, that Man was directed to at first, he is that way given, even since the Fall, though without Strength. He conceits himself able to do somewhat, and hopes God will accept what he can do. So that a *legal Spirit*, is a proud *Spirit*; and carries in it both an undue Regard to *Self*, and a practical Opposition to the Gospel, as publishing Salvation from Sin and Wrath, by the free rich Mercy of God through Christ; whereas an *Evangelical Spirit* expresses itself, as in *Gal. ii. 19, 20.* "I thro' the Law am dead to the Law, that I might live unto God, &c." An *Evangelical Spirit*, therefore, is, an humble self-denying, Christ magnifying, and Grace exalting Spirit, as well as a Spirit of Love and Obedience. With such a Spirit as this did the *Jailor* cry out,
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“What shall I do to be saved,” as is evident to me from the Answer, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved*; where we have (1.) an Exhortation; and (2.) a precious suitable Promise.

The Voice of the *Law*, as has been hinted, is, *do and live*. That of the *Gospel*, *believe, and thou shalt be saved*. Observe, the different Tenor and Language of these two. The *Law* does not say, *Do and be saved*; but, *Do and live*; i. e. If thou obeyest the Commands of God perfectly, thou shalt live for ever in the Presence of God, or in Communion with him. The *Gospel* does not say, *Believe and live* only, but, *Believe and be saved*. Thus did the Answer of the Text accommodate itself to the foregoing Question. The *Taylor* had cried out, *What shall I do to be saved*? And the Answer is, *Believe, &c.* — Where two Things are considerable in the Exhortation given. The *Act* recommended, and the *Object* pointed at. The *Act* is *Believing*, which, in the usual Acceptation of the Word, respects *Propositions* or *Persons*. With respect to *Propositions* 'tis an *Assent* to them as true; which *Assent* is either attended with serious mature Consideration, or it is not: And 'tis either suitably affecting, or it is not so. If our Belief of, or Assent to, any particular Truths is not attended with a due Consideration of them, we call it a bare speculative Assent, which, supposing the Truths assented to, or professedly believed, to be Matters of very great Importance, and chiefly concerning, is rather hurtful and destructive than profitable and saving. But if our Assent to particular Truths, is attended with due Consideration, we might call it a considerate Assent, of which kind our Belief of practical, important, Truths, doubtless ought to be. Again, If our Belief of, or As-

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sent to, this or that Truth, does suitably affect our Minds, we call it, a cordial, hearty Belief: And such an Assent to Evangelical Truth, is what the Apostle *John* means, 1 *John* v. 1, 5, and the Apostle *Paul*, *Rom.* x. 9, 10, where 'tis expressed, by *believing in*, and *with, the Heart*.—But as *Faith*, or *Believing*, usually regards *Propositions*, so it regards *Persons* also; in respect to whom 'tis either a Believing the Truth of what they say, and so 'tis the same with an Assent to *Propositions*, or 'tis a trusting to them, and having Confidence in them, as able and willing to do what we desire and request from them. Accordingly to Believe on Christ, 'tis not merely a Believing what Christ says, or what the Gospel reporteth concerning him, but 'tis “ a trusting to “ him ” as a suitable sufficient Saviour: 'Tis a convinced, awakned, humbled Soul's “ looking “ to *him* whom he has pierced by his Sins: ” 'Tis such an one's “ fleeing to this City of Refuge: ” 'Tis his “ committing himself to “ Christ, ” or “ casting the Care of his precious Soul on him, ” as able and willing to save. These are a few of the many Scripture Descriptions of *saving Faith*; all which as they respect CHRIST, amount to nothing more nor less than thus much. (1.) A Belief of the Record of the Gospel concerning Christ; (2.) An hearty Approbation of the appointed Method of Salvation; or, as we sometimes express it, a *Consent*, a taking Christ as he is offered, a closing with him; and (3.) A trusting to him, as a merciful, faithful, suitable, all-sufficient Saviour. — When the Apostle says, (2 *Tim.* i. 12.) “ I know whom “ I have believed, &c. ” 'tis as though he had said, I know how merciful, faithful, sufficient he is, whom I have confided in for Eternity, or entrusted my everlasting Concerns with. If we as-

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sent to the Gospel Record as true, we do well. But a Faith of that kind, meerly, is not sufficient. The Devils, in this Sense, believe and tremble. *James. ii. 19.* Such a Belief as this we call an historical Faith. *Again.* If with our *Assent* there is joined a *Consent* to the Gospel Method, or a receiving him in all his Offices, *that* prepares us to put our Trust in him, and warrants us to lay hold on him as ours. *Rev. xxii. 17.* "Let him who is a thirst, come, and whosoever will," (whoever chuses Christ to be his Prophet, Priest, and King) "let him take the Water of Life freely." For these two Things, a trusting to Christ for Salvation, and an applying him to ourselves as ours, are plainly different; and they are sometimes called by these distinguishing Names, the Faith of *Reliance*, and the Faith of *Assurance*; of which two, the former is justifying saving Faith properly, and the latter an *Effect* of it, rather than *Faith* itself. So that the Meaning of the Text is not. Be thou assured that Christ is thy Saviour, and thou shalt be saved by him; or, lay hold on Christ as thine, and his Salvation shall be thine; but the true Meaning of it is to this Purpose. As CHRIST is the appointed Saviour of Sinners, and thou art lost irrecoverably without *him*, so if thou believest the Report of the Gospel concerning *him*, and takest *him* to be thine, consenting to be saved in *his* Way, and resolving to continue seeking after *him*; if so, thou shalt assuredly obtain, in due Time, the compleat final Salvation from Hell and Sin, which thou art so desirous of, and thoughtful about; let thy past Sins be ever so numerous and aggravated, and thy present Unworthiness ever so great. Don't Despair of Mercy whatever thou hast done. Since God has opened thine Eyes to see what Sin is, and what a vile

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wretched Creature thou art in thyself ; and since he has brought thee to reflect on thy past evil Ways, and thou art heartily concerned for them as offensive to God, don't be cast down, or discouraged : The God, whom thou hast so grievously provoked, is ready to forgive thro' Christ ; and if thou trustest to him, He can and will save thee from all the Miseries which thou'dreadest, and from all the Sins which thou abhorrest. — In this short Paraphrase on *ver.* 31. I have put together the three Acts of Faith that have been distinguished, with a summary Account of the Salvation promised to Believers. Each of these three Acts of Faith, *Assent, Consent, Reliance*, is often put for the Whole of it. The *First* in 1 John v. 3, 5, 10. Rom. x. 9. Isa. liii. 1. The *Second*, John i. 11, 12. Chap. v. 40. Colof. ii. 6. The *Third*, in our Text, and many others. — But for fully understanding the Sense and Propriety of this Answer, we are to consider (1.) The Quality of the Person spoken to. (2.) The Suitableness of the Exhortation to such an One. (3.) The Connection between the *Believing* recommended, and the *Salvation* promised.

The *Person* directly spoken to, was one who had been a Sinner above many ; a vile notorious Rebel and Persecutor ; a very different Person from the *Lydia* of whom before. *She*, antecedently to her hearing of the Apostle, seems to have been a Person of some Sobriety, as well as a Worshipper of God, after the Manner of the Jews : Whereas the *Jailor* was an Idolater, of a severe, morose, cruel Disposition, one who had neither the Meekness of a Christian, nor the Gentleness of many carnal unconverted Persons, in him. But was the Exhortation of the Text directed to this proud perverse Rebel as such ?

Or

Or, was this the Purport of it? Thou hast been a great Sinner, but "believe and thou shalt be saved," whether thou art inherently changed, and becomest a new Creature or no? Or, was he considered as a Sinner, &c. in an immediate due Preparedness for that Act of Faith, which believing on Christ does directly imply in it? No. *Again.* This *Taylor* had been a stupidly ignorant Person, a wretched Stranger to CHRIST, himself, and the Truths of God's Word. Now, while so, was he in a Fitness to be directed by such an Exhortation as this, or capable of hearing it to any good Purpose? Certainly, he was not. 'Tis, indeed, the immediate Duty of every one, to whom the Gospel of Christ speaks, to hearken thereto, and hearing it to believe on Christ. *John* vi. 28, 29. But tho' 'tis incumbent on every one who hears of CHRIST to believe on him, many are too ignorant to be as yet capable of profiting by this Lesson in my Text, and have need of being further prepared for it by Convictions of Sin, some Discovery of the Way of Salvation by Christ, and the good Spirit's so influencing their Wills, as to persuade their sincerely complying with the appointed Method of Salvation. — Accordingly, when *Paul* and *Silas* directed the *Taylor* as in the Text, he was not the stupidly insensible Person, or the proud perverse Rebel against God, that he had been: Neither was he affrighted meerly; but so convinced, awakned, humbled, as to be ready to accept Salvation, upon any Terms honourable to God, or that the Word of Christ might suggest to him; in which Case, no Direction could have been better suited to him, than this in the Text. The Form of this Direction, is, indeed, considerably different from several others recorded in the Old or New Testament as spoken by
Way

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way of Reply to some such Question as that of the *Jailor*. These occur in *Micah*. iii. 6, 7, 8. *Luke* iii. 10, 12, 14. *Matth.* xix. 16, 17. *Acts* ii. 37, 38, 39, 40. Of which, some, indeed all but the last, (the Sense and Design of which were pretty much the same with those of the Text) are rather adapted to convince of Sin, and check the proud Conceits of ignorant Formalists and Pharisees, than to direct and encourage such an one as we have represented the *Jailor* to be. *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ*. They direct him to Faith, and to an explicit particular Faith on Christ: To *Faith*, because without this " 'tis impossible to please God," in any Age. (*Heb.* xi. 6.) And to *Faith on Christ*, because the Dependance of our whole Salvation on his Sufferings and Death, or the special Influence of his Merit and Intercession on the Salvation of Sinners in every Part of it, is more clearly and fully revealed in Gospel-Times than in any former Age. 'Tis remarkable that they don't say,

(1.) Believe on the free rich Mercy of God; but "believe on — Christ;" thereby intimating that how free and abundant soever the Mercy of God is, it saves none without CHRIST. Free Grace, rich Mercy, is indeed the Object of Faith, but not exclusively of Christ. *Rom.* iv. 3, 5, 24, 25. It forgives and saves none without the Satisfaction, and Intercession of *Christ*.

(2.) The Text says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," because *He* is the Substance of the Promises. To *him*, as a federal Head, the Promises were originally given; and by *him*, as appearing in that Quality, the Blessings of the Promise, (Pardon, Sanctification, &c.) were merited; in Regard to which, the Titles of *Saviour* and *our Hope*, are appropriated to *him*, sometimes

times. (*Titus* iii. 6. *1 Tim.* i. 1.) He being, by such Characters, distinguished from God the Father, as sometimes God the Father is thereby distinguished from him. *1 Tim.* i. 1.

(3.) The Exhortation of the Text does not run thus, Repent and turn to God; but "Believe on — CHRIST," to signify, that as Infinite Mercy saves none without the Merit and Intercession of *Christ*, and as the Promises contain in them nothing but what was merited by *him*, so no Repentance and Obedience will avail without *Faith*; and, in Times and Places when and where the Doctrine of CHRIST is published, without a particular Faith on *him*, as the meritorious Procurer of a compleat Salvation for guilty dying Sinners. Repentance is, indeed, a saving Grace: Without this there can be no Forgiveness, no Salvation. And many encouraging Promises strongly declare God's Readiness to forgive all true Penitents. But the Repentance and Obedience which God accepts, are the Repentance of Believers (*Mark* i. 15. *Acts* xx. 21.) and the Obedience of Faith. *Rom.* xvi. 26.—I add, that the *Faith*, directed to in the Text, respects CHRIST not as *Man*, or *God*, or *God-Man*, meerly; but as a *divine Saviour*; one who has satisfied the Demands of Justice for guilty Offenders, and merited a compleat Salvation from Hell and Sin for such. One Branch of his Character is this. *The Man Christ Jesus*. Nothing can be more repugnant to the entire Gospel of Christ than the *Manichee* Doctrine of his being God only, and *Man*, (or an incarnate, suffering, dying, crucified Saviour) but in Appearance. He became, and continues to be, as real a Man as any one ever was. However, as he could not have sufficed for such as we are, could not have satisfied and merited by his Sufferings and Death, if he had

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had been a Man only, so he is not the proper Object and Ground of our *Faith*, and *Hope*, as such. We put our Trust in him who is Man, but not *as Man*. Were we to do so, we should lye open to the Curse. *Jerem. xvii. 5.* CHRIST could not have been a suitable Person for such poor Creatures as we to depend upon, had he not been JEHOVAH. (*Isa. xliii. 11.* Chap. *xlv. 22.*) But as absolute Mercy saves none, so Christ as God, or God-Man, meerly, is not the Object of justifying saving Faith, which is described as "Believing on him who justifieth the Ungodly," and as "Faith in the Blood of Christ," and "Faith on him," to signify to us, that not as God, or as Man, or as God in our Nature; meerly, but as a suffering dying Saviour, we are to look to him, and trust in him, and in God the Father through him; according to *Rom. iv. 24, 25.* and that *1 Pet. i. 21.* which, by the way, I chuse to compare with the Text. In the Text I am upon, the Object of Faith is CHRIST himself, without any expresse Notice of GOD THE FATHER: In that of *Peter*, GOD THE FATHER and CHRIST are both mentioned, but in a different Manner; Christ being pointed at as the *direct immediate* Object of Faith, and God the Father as the *ultimate* Object of it. Believers are described not meerly as trusting in God, or depending on Christ, but as "by him" "believing in God;" and God the Father, as the Sovereign Lawgiver, satisfied by his Obedience to the Death, is described as "raising him" "from the Dead, and giving him Glory," for this End, "that our Faith and Hope might be" "in God."

I now come to the *Promise* of the Text as connected with the Direction given; and *this* I shall be very brief upon.

I. *Faith*

1. *Faith is prerequisite to Salvation.* The Unbeliever, continuing and dying such, is infallibly lost for ever. *John* iii. 36. I don't mean, that every one who labours under distressing Doubts and Fears is eternally lost; but he, or she, whom the Word and Spirit bring not to an humbling Sense of Sin, and who, being convinced of Sin, is not prevailed upon to receive Christ in all his Offices, and receiving him to rest on him for Salvation.—Now this is different from *Assurance*. The Language of *Assurance* is, "Christ is mine, and I am his." I am, God be praised for it, a pardoned Sinner, &c. The Language of *pure Faith*, what we commonly call the Faith of Reliance, is, "The holy God, whom I have so much dishonoured, might justly abhor and condemn me; but Christ and free Grace being all-sufficient, and the Gospel inviting such as I am to come to Christ, I above all Things desire, and hope, and will seek, to be justified by him, and eternally saved through him." See this more fully expressed, agreeably to the *Assent, Consent, Reliance*, that true Faith includes in it, in my Discourse on *Lydia*, p. 20.

2. *Faith will certainly issue in Salvation.* The Promise of the Text implies not only the Necessity of Believing, but the Efficacy of it. *John* iii. 16, 17, 36. *Rom.* x. 11, 13.

3. *Faith has a special Influence on our Salvation.* *Ephes.* ii. 8. This is evident from the Justification by Faith so earnestly contended for in the Epistles to the *Romans* and *Galatians*, and from divers other Scripture Passages, as, *Isa.* liii. 11. *1 Pet.* i. 5. As to this, which I have oft insisted on, you may find somewhat in my *Scripture Doctrine of imputed Sin and Righteousness*, p. 31, 32, 54, 55, 56.—But, Why is *Faith* so far honoured? Because it has Christ, and free Grace for

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the Objects of it; so that, to ascribe our Salvation to the *Faith of Reliance* spoken of, it is all one with ascribing it to *Christ and Grace*. Therefore,

1. We should all of us, the guiltiest and vilest not excepted, be concerned to return to GOD with our whole Hearts, and to do honour to CHRIST by trusting to *him*, with free, rich, infinite Mercy, for the whole of our Salvation. If a great Person, one who is not only rich but compassionate, and has given many Proofs of his being so, should send to such and such indigent wretched Objects, inviting them to come and wait at his Door for suitable Relief, and assuring them, in as strong Terms as is possible, of his Readiness to grant them whatever they want, if they will come and keep waiting till he shall send them the Supplies that are needful for them; supposing this, Will not this noble generous Person think himself slighted, and to an high Degree dishonoured, if the indigent starving Wretches whom he so generously invites, should refuse to hearken, or neglect to come? Would they not be chargeable with egregious Folly, or shameful Pride, or a scandalous Distrust of so able and compassionate a Friend, if being invited to come, and encouraged by such ample merciful Promises, they should harbour a Mistrust of them, and instead of relying on them, should say, "What signifies our going, and waiting? Perish we must; and therefore our going will signify nothing;" Or, "If he does really compassionate us, and has a Mind to relieve us, let him come himself, or send Supplies by some other Hand; we won't go to him, we don't care to continue waiting at his Door;" Or, "though we are poor, and in a wretched starving Condition, yet we don't chuse to be indebted to
" *him*,

“ *him*, or dependant on *him* altogether, we will “ seek Supplies in some other Way.” This is the real Language of *Unbelief* in regard to Christ. *John* v. 40. So that

2. If any miscarry, under the Gospel, or fall short of Heaven, it is for Want of the Faith on Christ directed to in the Text.—In the Case already supposed, What is the real Ground of the perishing of the indigent starving Wretches invited to come? Their non-complying with the Proposal made to them, or their Mistrust and Disregard of the rich generous Person so kindly inviting them; so, if you search the Matter to the bottom, you will find, that the miscarrying, and final Condemnation, of Sinners under the Gospel, are owing to this, Their not, closing with the appointed Method of Salvation; their not, complying with kind Gospel Promises, or trusting to Christ, and free Grace, for the promised Salvation.

3. We learn from hence, in what Sense, and on what Ground, it is so often asserted by our Divines, that *Unbelief* is the great damning Sin under the Gospel.—What does such an Assertion imply in it? Not, that there is any one Sin which does not in itself deserve divine Wrath, or which is not damning in the just Tendency of it: But, as *free Grace* promises all needful Supplies, and as *Christ* invites the chief of Sinners to come to *him*, for whatever they want; so, let the Sins of Men be ever so great and many, they are all freely forgiven to them, who being sensible of their Sins, and feeling their Want of spiritual Blessings, and consenting to be saved in a Gospel Way, are directed and encouraged to look to Christ, and trust in him for the Whole of their Salvation. *Hosea* xiv. 2, 3. *Jerem.* iii. 22, 23.

4. We learn, how to understand those Texts which direct poor Sinners to Obedience as the

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Condition of Life; and those which exhort to Repentance and Conversion in order to Forgiveness; and those which ascribe the Believer's Title to Heaven, or his special Interest in the divine Favour, to his doing the Will of God, or keeping the Commands of God. Of the first kind is *that*, *Matth. xix. 17.* which declares to us not the Gospel Method of Salvation, but the Tenor of the Covenant of Works. Of the second Sort is, *Acts iii. 19.* which signifies no more than *this*, that the impenitent unconverted Sinner is guilty before God, and without Repentance, or turning to God, there can be no Forgiveness. Of the third kind are, *1 John iii. 21, 22. Revel. xxii. 14.* which point at *Obedience* to the Commands of God, not as an *antecedent Means*, but an *Evidence* of the Believer's Title to Eternal Life. And to this Sense we are to interpret *James ii. 21, 24.* See, my *Scripture Doctrine of imputed Sin and Righteousness*, p. 55, 56, 57. where it is shown, *that* Justifying Faith is not the same with Godly Sincerity, and *that* the Justification by Faith argued for by the Apostle *Paul* is nothing else but Justification by a crucified Jesus humbly depended upon, &c.

5. The same kind of Food is not suitable to *all*, and Ministers should endeavour to dispense to every one, what his particular Case requires; to convince and awaken the carnally secure; to humble the proud spirited; to direct awakned humbled Sinners to Christ; and to encourage them whose being convinced, awakned and humbled qualify for *that*; as in the Case of the *Sailor* to whom, being now wounded with a Sense of Guilt, and as willing to be saved from all his Sins as from threatned Wrath, nothing could be more wisely adapted than this Evangelical Direction, *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou*

thou shalt be saved. — “Every rational Being,” said the great *Origen*, “must be nourished with proper suitable Food, and God’s Word is the most genuine Food of such an One.” This was well spoken, not without just Sentiments, I hope, of the Necessity, Perfection, and Sufficiency of the Scripture. But tho’ every Part of God’s written Word is true, and every divine Truth belonging to it is of considerable Weight, and Ministers are to declare, boldly, the whole Counsel of God; Care must be taken, to preach not only *Truth*, but seasonable pertinent Truths, on every Occasion; to dispense to all, not only what may be reckoned wholesome substantial Food, instead of *Poison*, or *Frat*, but “to give to every one his Meat in due Season.” Particularly, every Minister of Christ should be able to adopt those Words, as expressive in some Measure, of his own Abilities and Disposition. “The Lord God has given me the Tongue of the Learned, that I should know how to speak a Word in Season to them who are weary, &c.” (*Isa. l. 4.*) Which Words, principally meant of CHRIST himself, but applicable to his Ministers, as acting subordinately to him, carry in them no less than these four requisite ministerial Qualifications. (1.) A good Degree of Scriptural, Evangelical, Experimental Knowledge. *Matth. xiii. 52.* (2.) An Aptness to teach, or to speak intelligibly, clearly, suitably, on particular Occasions. *1 Tim. iii. 2. 2 Tim. ii. 14, 15.* — (3.) Compassion for the awakned, disconsolate, discouraged. *1 Thes. v. 11, 14.* (4.) Prudence in applying Truths, Promises, particular Occurrences, for the Relief and encouraging of *such*, as well as for rousing the carnally secure, and admonishing the unruly.

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ruly. *ibid.* — Christ, said *Bede* *, sent the Holy Scriptures into all Parts of the World; thereby preaching Faith in his Name, and an Hope of Salvation to all who belong to his Kingdom, that is, all his Elect. One of these was the *Jailor*. For his Sake, and a few others, the Gospel was sent to *Philippi*. Thither being directed by the Providence and Spirit of God, *Paul* and *Silas*, preached to this Man in particular Faith on the Name of Christ; therewith giving him Encouragement to hope for not only his own Salvation, but that of his whole Family besides. *Believe*, said they, — *and thou shalt be saved, and thy House*. What did the latter Part of this Promise imply in it? Not, that if the Jailor believed on Christ, that Faith of his would be sufficient and effectual to save all of his Family, together with himself, whether they believed and were converted or no. Nor was this the Intendment of it, that upon his becoming a Believer and Follower of Christ, those of his Family, would thereby enjoy the Means of Salvation; particularly these three; his Prayers for them, his good Instructions, his pious Example. But the Meaning of that Part of the Promise, *and thy House*, was either. (1.) If they are perswaded to believe, they shall be saved too; there being but one Way to Heaven, and all God's People being Partakers of the like precious Faith. Or (2.) Their Faith and Salvation shall certainly follow on *thine*. So that this Clause was a special Promise granted to the *Jailor*, assuring him of God's gracious Intentions as to his Family. — Not that the Conversion of the Head

* *Christus Scripturas Sanctas universum misit in mundum; quibus fidem sui nominis, & spem salutis, cunctis qui ad regnum suum pertinent, hoc est, Electis omnibus predicaret.*
In Exam. l. i. c. ii.

of a Family, is always attended with the Conversion of those under his Care: There were Instances of the contrary, even in the primitive Age. This might be argued and proved, if it was needful, particularly, from 1 Cor. vii. 14, 16. 1 Pet. iii. 1, 2. Matth. x. 35, 36. You will say, perhaps, Why then, did God convert the Family of the *Tailor*, and from whence is it, that the Conversion of one of a Family is oft a Means of the Conversion of others? In reply to this, some would be apt to say. Those of the Family of the *Tailor* might be sincere virtuous Persons, though ignorant of the Gospel: This, therefore, being preached to them, did the more easily work upon them, as finding them teachable and tractable. Was not this the Case of *Cornelius*, not now to speak of any others? I incline to think it was. His Character as given, *Acts* x. 2, 3, 4. with *Peter's* Words, ver. 34, 35. seem to prove as much. And from that Instance of *Cornelius*, one would be apt to infer, that if, in any Place where the Gospel is not known, in the Fulness of it, there are those whom the heart-searching God knows to be upright, rather than such should perish for want of a better Knowledge, he will contrive some way or other to provide them therewith; or he will open their Understandings in a more immediate Way; or he wont suffer the Degree of Ignorance, which they labour under, to be destructive to them. *Cornelius* might be a truly good Man, before *Peter* was sent to him: And he might be before *that*, a Believer on Christ. For living among the *Jews*, he might know that God had promised a Saviour, (*Acts* x. 37.) though not as yet convinced that *Jesus of Nazareth* was *he*; which was the Case of the two Disciples sent from *John*, (*Matth.* xi. 2, 3.) and
of

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of *Apollos*, Acts xviii. 25. and of him spoken of, *Mark* ix. 38. — But allowing all this, the same was not the Case of either the *Jailor*, or any of his House. For what Reason have we to suppose it was? Nothing like what is recorded of the Piety of *Cornelius*, (Acts x. 2, &c.) is related of *these* antecedently to their becoming Hearers of *Paul* and *Silas*. Only the Conversion of the *Jailor* made way for theirs; and this was owing, not to any Seeds of Religion sown in their Hearts aforehand; or to Docility and Tractableness of Temper; but to the free rich Grace of God thro' Christ, unto which it must be ascribed, that some are subdued to the Yoke of Christ, while others remain hardened and inflexible, and that Salvation being brought to one of a Family, is the Occasion of it's likewise reaching some others. — Sometimes the Conversion of one, is preparatory to that of others of the same Family, (*Zaccheus*, *Lydia*, the *Jailor*, &c. were Instances of that) and sometimes 'tis not so, to let us see that God is merciful to whom he will; and the special Mercies of Pardon, and Conversion, he with-holds from whom he will. *Rom.* ix. 18. *Chap.* xi. 7. — But to go on with the *Jailor*.

Another Consequent on his Conversion was this. “He and all his, were baptized straitway.” *ver.* 33. Here observe,

1. The Parties baptized, according to this Text, were *he*, and *all his*; his *Wife*, if he was a married Man; his *Children*, if he was a Father; his *Servants*, particularly his *Slaves*, if he had such, which is not improbable. For the *Philippians* being a *Roman* Colony, and the *Romans* being then Masters of the World, *Slaves* they had in great Abundance. *Slaves* are their Masters legal Property, and so might be called *his*, rather

rather more properly than other Servants. Many of the Primitive Christians were of this Class. Some say, *most*. But to be sure *many* were such. Such were there among the Believers at *Corinth*. 1 Cor. vii. 21, 22. And 'tis not improbable that the "Saints of *Cæsars* Household," (*Phil.* iv. 22.) were Servants of this Kind. Of what Rank they were, the Apostle does not say; but they were *Domesticks* of the Emperor, and probably *Slaves*. Divine Grace overpass'd *Cæsar* himself; but laid hold on the Hearts of some of his meaner *Domesticks*. And *these* were held in such Reputation, that as they were Members of the Church at *Rome*, so the *Apostle* inserted a distinct honourable Mention of them in his Epistle to the *Philippians*; and presuming, they would not be disdained by the good People at *Philippi*, he sends to them greetings, from these converted *Slaves*.

2. The Persons spoken of, being now become sincere Professors of Faith on Christ, were *baptized straitway*: Which teaches us, that as soon as any engage in a creditable Profession of Christ, *Baptism* belongs to them, if not Partakers of the Ordinance before: And if there is ground of hoping as to any, that they belong to CHRIST, such, if baptized already, have an immediate Claim to the *Lord's Supper*, ought to be stirred up thereto, and should be afraid to live in the neglect of so venerable an Ordinance. *Delays* in Matters of Religion, are sinful and dangerous. Therefore, delay not to search into, and enquire after, the State of thy Soul: Delay not to attend on every appointed Means of Grace: If thou hast been an ignorant Hearer of the Word hitherto, desire to become an understanding Hearer of it, *forthwith*: If thou hast been an unconcerned negligent Hearer, become, *instantly*, a concerned, thoughtful diligent Attender on the Word of God. If

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thou hast lived *prayerless*, dare not to continue so one Hour longer ; but acquaint thyself with thy spiritual Wants, and with the Promises of God, for learning from thence, what to ask of God ; and let Petitions suitable thereto ascend Heavenward, from thy Heart and Lips, often, daily, many Times in a Day. And, if there is reason to hope, thy hearing of the Word, has drawn thee to CHRIST, delay not to chuse, and engage in, such a compleat visible Church-Fellowship, as every Follower of CHRIST is called to.

Q Is every creditable Professor, not as yet Partaker of the Ordinance, to be *baptized strait-way* ?

R. Yes, *Acts* ii. 41. *Chap.* viii. 12, 37. *Chap.* ix. 18. *Chap.* xvi. 15.

Q What, then, are we to judge of the old Discipline of the *Catechumens*, in the third and some following Centuries ?

R. As it concerned those in whom a good Change was begun, the New Testament gave no Countenance to it, and the Ground of it was rotten. I here refer to p. 25. of the *Review and Vindication of a late Treatise on the Subjects and Mode of Baptism*. — Some of the *Antients* were too severe upon this Head. So *Chrysostom*, who says, “ There is no Relation between a *Believer* and a *Catechumen*. ” And the pretended *Apostolical Constitutions*, forbid Believers to pray with a *Catechumen*, so much as in a private House. Yet some of those despised Persons were, in all likelihood, very good Christians. *Origen*, as I might show, preferred some of them to many of the reputed Faithful, or such as were in full visible Church-Fellowship. — Let the *Scripture*, and not antient Ecclesiastical Custom, be our *Standard*. Now if we adhere to that, as Ministers and People ought conscientiously

scientifically to do, every sincere Christian, tho' comparatively weak, will be regarded as "an Heir of God, and a Coheir with Christ," consequently intitled to all Gospel Privileges and Ordinances.

Another *Effect* of the *Taylor's* Conversion was his *Kindness* shown to *Paul* and *Silas*, "his Labour of Love." What his Behaviour towards them *now* was, we are told, *ver. 33, 34*. "He took them the same Hour of the Night, and washed their Stripes; — and when he had brought them into his House, he set Meat before them." As to which Acts of Kindness, Observe,

1. His *Forwardness* for them. What he did, he did without Delay, *the same Hour of the Night*.

2. The *Seasonableness*, and *Suitableness*, of them. His Love acted towards them as present Necessities required. He was now become like a Tree that bringeth forth it's Fruit in the Season of it. *Psal. i. 3*.

3. They were *equal to present Abilities and Opportunities*. He did, what he could; the utmost he was capable of at present. But, might not such Actions as these be done by an unconverted Man?

R. Yes. There is no external Act of religious Duty, but what is practicable by such an one. He may read, hear, pray, think of God, give Alms, do what is serviceable to the Gospel, and Ministers of Christ. But what an unconverted Man does without Faith and Love, from a Dread of Punishment, or from natural Compassion, the sincere Convert performs out of Love; and let such an one do ever so little, from so noble a Principle as the prevailing Love God, 'tis accepted. *Heb. vi. 10. Matth. x. 41, 42.*

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—But may not the Unconverted find in themselves a *real Love* to the Ministers and Disciples of Christ? Yes. In us, and many others, there is a natural Love to GOD, CHRIST, and them who are *his*. But our natural Love to GOD, since the Fall, rises not to the loving him *as God*: 'Tis not a superlative, prevailing, governing Love to *him*, for what he is, and what he does. 'Tis nothing more than the common Principle of Esteem and *Veneration* for a great and excellent *Benefactor*. 'Tis not such a Regard for GOD, as makes us above all Things desire to Love him, to serve him according to his own Will, and to live in the Enjoyment of him. 'Tis not such a *transcendant* Love, as renders us uneasy in the Absence of the beloved Object, whatever our other Enjoyments are, and makes us mourn because our Love to him, and serving of him, are so imperfect. Consequently, our natural Love to *God's Children*, and our Love to them when we become *such* ourselves, are considerably different. The *former*, whatever are the Attractives to it, is not a Love to them, for what they are in respect to GOD, influenced and governed by the prevailing Love of GOD himself; but so is the *latter*. (1.) 'Tis a Kindness and Esteem for the Children of GOD as such; a Love excited by such Considerations as these; their being a People whom GOD particularly loves, and who superlatively love *him*. A natural Man may esteem the Children of GOD as his Fellow-Creatures, as his Relatives, as his Benefactors, as of the same Party with himself; but the true Convert loves them as they are, GOD's Children, Christ's Followers. (2.) 'Tis a Love of good Will, Beneficence, and Complacency towards, not only *some*, but *all* of them: A Concern for their Interests temporal and spiritual; a Readiness to perform

perform Offices of Kindness and Compassion for them; a Delight in the Christian Graces that adorn them; and a deliberate choosing to be associated with them, in Duty and Blessedness, to all Eternity. (3.) 'Tis such a Love to all God's Children as such, as is subordinate to, and directed by, the superlative Love of God himself. This the Psalmist professed, *Psal. xvi. 3.* For this Kind of Love, the primitive Saints are commended. *Ephes. i. 15. Col. i. 4.* Their Faith in the Lord Jesus, was attended with a sincere cordial Respect for all the Saints. They were taught of God to love one another as Christ's. *1 Thes. iv. 9, 10.* For *this*, the *Thessalonian* Converts were particularly famous. *1 Thes. iv. 10. Chap. v. 11. 2 Thes. i. 3.* — And the Apostle *John* earnestly insists on this kind of Love, as an Evidence of Love to God, and happy Fellowship with him. *1 John. ii. 9, 10. Chap. iii. 10, 11, 12, 14. Chap. v. 1, 2.* — Some are against trying our State by *Marks* and *Signs*: But how can *that* consist with the Apostle's saying, as *Chap. iii. 14.* “ We know that we have “ passed from Death to Life, because we love “ the Brethren.” And, “ By this we know, “ that we love the Children of God, when we “ love God, and keep his Commandments.” — Let me, therefore, put this to you. What is your *Affection* to the Ministers and Disciples of *Christ*? Do you delight in a Soul searching Ministry? Some will say, We love to hear *Christ* preached, and to hear of Free-Grace. But, should we not, likewise, love to hear Sin reprov'd, to have our Sins brought to Remembrance by the Word preached, and to be led into a thorough Knowledge of ourselves? — *Again*, Do you love *all* God's People with the Love aforementioned? This, and Love to *CHRIST*,
are

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are inseparable. Of what avail are *Orthodoxy*, and *flaming Zeal*, without *these*? Indeed no turning from Error to Orthodoxy; from Idolatry and Superstition, to the true instituted Worship of God; from Profaneness to Sobriety, and Decency of Behaviour; from stupid Thoughtlessness about Eternity, to an abiding Sense of Sin, and a Concern about our future Welfare; from a Contempt or Neglect of divine Ordinances, to an external partaking of them; nothing of all this can suffice, if the *Mind*, *Will*, and *Affections* are not *renewed*, as those of *Lydia* and the *Jailor* were. And if this saving Change is begun upon us, how does it discover itself? (1.) We are as willing to be saved from all our Sins, as from the Miseries due to them; and chuse to be beholden to *Christ* and *Grace* for the whole of our Salvation. *Isa.* xlv. 22, 24. (2.) We love God with all our Hearts, and are possessed with an abiding Concern to know, love, serve him better. (3.) Indwelling Sin is our principal Burden. The Remains of Unbelief, Pride, Worldliness, Rebellion and Enmity against God, that are within us, we feel, lament, abhor, as offensive and dishonourable to God. *Rom.* vii. 18, 21, 22, 24.— (4.) We can't forget our past Unkindness, Ingratitude, Disobedience, with respect to God; but oft remember these Things with an ingenuous self-loathing, and Godly Sorrow. *Ezek.* vi. 9. *Chap.* xxxvi. 31. (5.) Our Souls hunger and thirst after divine Ordinances, as they are *God's*, or *Christ's*; and as appointed Means of Growth and Establishment in Grace. *Pf.* xxvii. 4. *Pf.* xlii. 1, 2. *Pf.* lxxxiv. 2. *Pf.* lxxv. 4. 1 *Pet.* ii. 2, 3. (6.) Our Hearts are where *CHRIST* is. We watch against the prevailing Love of the World; and long to find in ourselves a growing Indifference to all earthly Enjoyments, with an increasing

sing Preparedness for the Work, Society, and pure satisfying Enjoyments, of Heaven. *Phil.* iii. 20. *Col.* iii. 1. *Rom.* viii. 23. *2 Cor.* v. 1, 2, 4. (7.) We like *that* Ministry best, which is most *searching*; which guards us against the Follies and Temptations we are in Danger from, and leads us into a thorough Acquaintance with ourselves. *Psal.* cxxxix. 23, 24. (8.) We chuse to "take up the Cross," desire and endeavour for an humble Submission to the correcting Hand of a wise, good, just God; and would wait all the Days of our appointed Time till our Change shall come. *Job* xiv. 14. *Mic.* vii. 9. *Matt.* xvi. 24. These Things tend to *Assurance*, and *holy Joy*, which the *Sailor* was brought to, presently upon his Believing. For

The last Particular of his History is, that *he rejoiced, believing in God, with all his House*. So that the *History* which we have of this Man, though short, is full of surprizing Particulars. What a wide Difference between the beginning and the concluding Part of it! The first Part sets him forth as a *rugged malicious Persecutor*: This last Part represents him, as *considerably advanced heavenward*. That *Wolf* of a Man was called not only to *Faith* on Christ, and visible Fellowship with God's People, but to an *holy Joy* resulting from thence.—Other Scriptures tell us of "the Joy of Faith." *Philip.* i. 25. *Rom.* xv. 13. This every sincere Believer is entitled to. And the Primitive Converts did ordinarily attain it, immediately upon, or soon after, their Conversion. The Apostle could profess, as *2 Cor.* vii. 4. "I am filled with Comfort; I am exceeding joyful in all our Tribulation." Now was this peculiar to *him*, and such first Rate Christians as he was? No. It was what the Disciples of Christ usually experienced. *Acts* xiii. 52. *1 Pet.* i. 8.

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2 Cor. v. 6, 7. 1 Thess. i. 6. What a wonderful Account is *that* given of the *Thessalonians*! They received the Word “with much Affliction,” yet “Joy of the Holy Ghost.” So did the *Jailor*, and his Family. Agreeably to the Accounts given of the Joy of *other* Primitive Converts, must we understand what is here told us of the *Jailor*. He rejoiced, in present Manifestations of divine Love, and in Hopes of future Glory. (*Rom. v. 2.*) Believing in God, firmly trusting in him, as reconciled by the Death of Christ—*With all his House*. He and they concurred in both *believing* and *rejoicing*.—They had, it is reasonably presumed, often sinned together: And, probably, they had spent many an Hour together in carnal Merriment, or in that Mirth of which the wise Man says, “It is mad, and what doth it?” *Eccles. ii. 2.* But now, being called out of Darkness, they believe together, and rejoice with each other.—The *Apostle*, writing to the *Philippians*, directs them to “rejoice in the Lord always.” *Chap. iii. 1.* *Chap. iv. 4, 5.* Now the *Jailor*, and *his*, might be of those good People at *Philippi*, whom the *Apostle* wrote to. They were so; unless they were all dead, or removed to some other Parts before the writing of that Epistle, which was, indeed, some Years after the Conversion I am treating of.—Some are of Opinion that the *Stephanas* spoken of, 1 Cor. i. 16. was the *Philippian Jailor*, who, say they, removed with his Family from *Philippi* to *Corinth*. But that Tradition is perfectly groundless. The House of *Stephanas* was the First-Fruits not of *Philippi*, but *Achaia*. 1 Cor. xvi. 15. As *Epenetus* was the first single Convert of that Province, *Rom. xvi. 5.* so the Household of *Stephanas* was the first entire Family converted therein.—I have sometimes supposed that the *Jailor* spoken of might be the excellent
and

and beloved *Epaphroditus*, who was employed as a Messenger between the Apostle and the *Philippians*. *Chap. ii. 25, 26, &c. Chap. iv. 18.* That this converted *Taylor* became not only a very exemplary Believer, but a Christian Pastor, and an useful Labourer in the Lord's Harvest, to me seems highly probable: For *Clement of Rome* * says, "The Apostles preaching, in Cities and Country-Places, ordained *their first Fruits*, having tried them by the Spirit, to be Bishops and Deacons of them who should believe." This antient Testimony is of considerable Weight. It imports, that the Apostles planted *Churches* not only in *Cities*, or larger Towns, but *Villages* also; that the only fixed resident Officers in those Churches were *Bishops and Deacons*; that *these*, antecedently to their Ordination, were tried by the Spirit, and the Persons appointed to be of these Orders were their *First-Fruits*. Since, then, the *Taylor* was the first converted Head of a Family that was capable of being elected into either of these Offices, it is not improbable that he was set apart to be a Bishop or Pastor of the *Philippian Church*, and if so, he might be the *Epaphroditus* that was so dear to *Paul* and the *Philippians*. That excellent Person was not, as some tell us, *the Bishop of Philippi*. Such an Officer, seems to have been unknown to the Primitive Age; since every one of the Primitive Churches, so far as we can learn from the antientest Christian Records, had a *Plurality* of Bishops, or fixed resident Pastors, in it, all perfectly co-ordinate. *Epaphroditus*, therefore, was not *the sole Bishop*, but one of the Bishops, or Pastors of the *Philippian Church*. (*Chap. i. 1.*) And so, I am almost persuaded, was the *Taylor*; which may appear the more likely, if the extraordinary Circumstances of his Conversion, and the

* *Epist. ad Corinth. c. 42.*

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Eminency of his Faith, as recorded in the Text, are considered by us. Who would not, from hence, imagine that he was raised up for *uncommon* Usefulness? He was not, indeed, equal to the Apostle *Paul*, whom we are warranted to consider as a Saint of the first Magnitude, and as a chief Minister of Christ, and one of the greatest Sufferers for the Gospel, that ever lived.—Neither do I insist on this *Jailor's* becoming an *Evangelist*, or put him down in the same Class with *Timothy*, *Titus*, *Luke*, &c. But the very antient Testimony of *Clement*, with the surprizing Particulars of his History, render it exceeding probable, that, being so wonderfully converted, he became what I have mentioned.—A Writer of the second Century, *Dionysius* of *Corinth*, informs us, that *Dionysius the Areopagite*, (*Acts* xvii. 34.) was ordained a Bishop of the Church of the *Athenians* *. Why, then, might not the *Jailor*, of whom a much more marvellous Account is delivered to us, be ordained a Bishop of the Church of the *Philippians*?—The Apostle left *Titus* in *Crete*, that he might ordain *Elders*, or *Bishops*, in every *City*, or *Town* †, or new planted Church. Now from whence were those *Elders*? Were they sent for from abroad? Is it not more probable they were taken from among the *first* or *eminentest* of the *Cretian* Converts? When therefore *Bishops* and *Deacons* became settled at *Philippi*, those Office-bearers in the Church were, probably, *Philippians*, not *Foreigners*; and one of the most considerable among them, in point of *Gifts*, *Grace*, *Usefulness*, might be the *Jailor*.—The Custom pointed at by *Clement* seems to have continued long after the Days of the Apostles. For Gre-

* This we are told in *Eusebius's Ecclesiast. Hist.*

† *Crete* was once noted for it's hundred *Cities*. But many of those *Cities*, *πολεις*, were no other than *small Towns*.

gory of *Neo-Cæsarea*, having converted some at *Comana*, a small Country Town, or Village in his Neighbourhood, he appointed one *Alexander*, a *Collier*, to be their *Bishop*. Now though that *Collier* might be a very excellent Christian, we can scarcely parallel him with our *Philippian Jailor*; who certainly was, to say the least, as fit to sustain the Office of a Christian Pastor, as either the honest *Collier*, or *Gregory* his Ordainer.—*Eusebius*, celebrating the Power of God's Word, says, "It prevailed upon innumerable Persons to become Christians, and *that* by Means of rustick Instruments.—A very large Number of Churches were planted, and that in the most famous Cities, through *Egypt*, *Lybia*, *Europe*, *Asia*, in Villages, Towns, and all manner of Places." Now how were all these Churches (*μυριαδὲς Ἐκκλησιῶν*) provided with *Pastors*? Many, most, if not *all*, we may presume, from among their *first* or *chief* Converts. *Usher*, in his Account of the Religion of the antient *Irish*, says, "When *Patrick* went to *Ireland*, he founded 365 Churches, over whom he set as many Bishops, with 3000 Presbyters." Were not those Bishops and Presbyters, for the most part at least, of the new Converts? Though therefore it is ridiculous to suppose, as some * have done, that the *Epaphroditus* so much esteemed by the Apostle, was either the *Epaphroditus* of *Nero's* Court, or the *Epaphroditus* whom *Josephus*, the famous *Jewish* Historian, had a particular Regard for, he might possibly be the same with our converted *Jailor*. Or, if these two were different, the latter was, in all likelihood, not only a very reputable useful Member, but a *Bishop* or *Pastor* of the *Philippian* Church. I don't say, *the Bishop*,

* *Berkelius*, *Salden*, and *Mr K*, the late ingenious and learned *Mr Walter Moyle's* Correspondent.

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it being certain that the Church at *Philippi* had more Bishops than *one* in it, as also the primo-primitive Church of *Jerusalem* had, (Acts xv. 6, 22, 23. Chap. xxi. 18.) and the Church of *Ephesus*, (Chap. xx. 17, 21.) and the Churches of *Crete* (*Tit.* i. 5.) and the Church at *Thessalonica*, (*1 Thes.* v. 12.) and the Church of *Colosse*, probably, (*Col.* i. 7. Chap. iv. 7.) and other primitive Churches. *Acts* xiv. 23. This last Text says, "they ordained—Elders in every Church." Now those *ordained Elders* were *Bishops*, besides *whom* and *Deacons*, the New Testament acknowledges no other fixed perpetual Church Officers; and 'tis not said, "they ordained *an Elder*, but *Elders* in every one of the Churches *there* pointed at." — The earliest Writer who seemingly points at a *President* or *Bishop*, or *single resident Pastor* in a Church, was *Justin Martyr*, who wrote about the middle of the second Century. After him, the *Bishop* spoken of, and pleaded for, by *Tertullian*, *Cyprian*, the *Ignatian Epistles*, the spurious *Apostolical Constitutions*, &c. was evidently a *presiding Presbyter*, or the Foreman of a Company of Presbyters in a particular Church, and nothing more; as has been irrefragably proved, by Dr *Owen*, Mr *Baxter*, Mr *Boyse*, and several others. But with *Jerom*, at the close of the fourth Century, or the Beginning of the fifth, we insist upon it, that the primitive Churches were ~~ordained~~ *governed*, each of them, (*Communi Concilio Presbyterorum*) by a common Council of Presbyters, or co-ordinate Pastors, acting in Concert. — And such an One at *Philippi*, (if not promoted to an higher Class) was our converted *Jailor*, the Ordination of *whom* was no Transgression of that Apostolical Constitution. *1 Tim.* iii. 6. "A Bishop must not be a *Novice*," or a raw weak injudicious Beginner in Religion.

Religion. For such an one (there is good reason to apprehend) this Convert, when the Church at *Philippi* had Elders ordained in it, was considerably superior to.—I have now gone thro' a very surprizing *Narrative*, and recommend it to the Consideration of all, as a most memorable Instance of the *sovereign Freeness* and *Almighty Efficacy*, of converting Grace. — Let me remark, upon the Whole, in a few Particulars.

1. We have, here, an Exception to *that* of the Wise Man, *Prov. xvi. 18.* "Pride goeth before Destruction, &c." which imports not meerly that Pride persisted in, tends to *Destruction*; but oftentimes, when Sinners are left to act a most remarkably proud, arrogant Part, it betokens Death and Hell being very near to them. But it is not always so. God sometimes suffers proud perverse *Rebels* to go on acting like themselves, and at length visits them with *renewing Grace*, and *spiritual Consolations*, which two concurring do wonderfully *sweeten* the Tempers of Men, or surprizingly alter them for the better. This was verified in the *Jailor*. What followed on his acting the proud malicious Part ascribed to him, *ver. 24*? Did divine Justice lay hold on this ravening Wolf, and throw him into the Prison of Hell, instantly, or soon after? No. Infinite Mercy exerted itself, and laid hold on the proud perverse Part of this *Profligate*, in such a *divine* Manner as to *transform* him. His Pride was subdued, the Haughtiness of his Spirit made to give Way, and he perswaded to become a sincere friendly Associate with *them*, whom he had spighted, and with a Spirit of impotent Malice set himself against. *v. p. 25.*

2. We have, in this History, an instance of the *Subordination of the natural World, to the Purposes*

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Purposes of Divine Grace. This World of ours was made for *Christ*, and the *Elect*. And all the Concerns of it are over-ruled by him with a special Regard to *them*. Colos. i. 15, 16, 17. Ephes. i. 23. 23. — The *Earthquake*, (ver. 26.) was sent in order to the Conversion of the *Jailor* and *his*. And why should *that* be wondered at, since “God’s own Son” came down from Heaven, and suffered, groaned, died for the same Purpose? *Earthquakes*, ’tis well known, are natural Events. but the beneficial Effects of them may be supernatural and saving nevertheless. So a *Thunder-Storm*, an *Hurricane*, an *Eclipse*, the Appearance of a *Comet*, a Fit of *Sickness*, the Death of some near Relative or Acquaintance, a Mortality among *Cattle*, the Rise and Progress of a wicked unnatural *Rebellion*, &c. any Thing of these Kinds, an Infinitely Wise and good God can make to subserve his most merciful Designs of converting and saving Sinners. A *Shower of Rain*, (or any Thing else how ordinary soever) the all-wise Being, can make Use of for good; as may be inferred from that Reproof, *Jer.* v. 22, 23, 24. Agreeably to *which*, the Providence and Word of God, at this Day, speak to the Inhabitants of *Great Britain*, thus. “Fear ye not *me*? Will ye “not, yet tremble, at *my* Presence,” who not long since did so awfully *admonish* you, and since *that*, have so graciously and seasonably *appeared* for you? Will nothing work upon your *revolting and rebellious Hearts*? Are both *Judgments and Mercies* ineffectual to persuade you? Shall a People whom God has so often *warned*, and *delivered*, continue hardened, and go on srowardly in ways leading to Destruction? How ridiculous this! How abominable! How provoking to the Holy One! How unworthy of professing Christians, and rational Beings!

3. What

3. What Reason have we to be concerned for having enjoyed the Gospel so long, with so little Advantage? Whereas the *Jailor* and *his* were brought to Faith, Holiness, visible Fellowship with God's People, and spiritual Joy, *presently*. But let not this discourage any, who, bewail past Misimprovements, are concerned to make a better Use of Opportunities for the future, and resolve to continue waiting. Does the good Spirit ordinarily work more sparingly, and slowly, now than he did formerly; this we are called to submit to; accounting it a rich Mercy, if God should work upon us effectually, as a *Sanctifier* and *Comforter*, after a patient waiting of several Years. Yet,

4. How easily can God revive dying Religion, in his own Time? 'Tis but working on the Hearts of *many*, as he was pleased to work on *Lydia*, and the *Jailor*, with their Families, and the Work is done. This, therefore, we should be solicitous about, and earnestly pray, for; since whatever God has determined and promised to do for Persons, Families, Churches, Kingdoms, he has declared to this Purpose. "I will yet for this be enquired of, by the House of *Israel*, to do it for them," *Ezek.* xxxvi. 37. But who is, of himself, sufficient even for *this*? Without *Christ*, we can do nothing. But his Grace is sufficient for us, and he has promised his Holy Spirit to them who ask it. I chuse not to conclude without putting down the Purport and Substance of the Latin Sentence quoted from *Augustin* in the Title Page. "Let them read and understand," (he is there speaking to the *Pelagians*) "let them observe and confess, that 'tis not the meer outward Ministry of the Word that converts Men; but by a secret, marvellous, ineffable, powerful, Working on their Hearts, he not only brings them to a Knowledge of divine Things, but inspires them with good
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"habitual Dispositions." Thus did God work on the *Jailor* and *his*. In the same Manner let us intreat him to work on *us*, *ours*, and *all others*, Magistrates, Ministers, Family-Governors, Members of particular Churches, Hearers of every Denomination, Anti-scripturists of every Sort, &c. not excepting the vile Miscreants whose publick Robberies, Murders, and treasonable Proceedings, have forfeited their Lives, and all of this World, to the Justice of the Nation. May the Almighty SPIRIT, to whom nothing is difficult, touch and turn the Hearts even of *these*.

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